

The Translation of Repetition in Arabic Religious Discourse Into English: The Case of the Quran

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Abstract—Despite growing interest in the study of the rendition of stylistic devices in Arabic literary texts, relatively little has been published on the transfer of Arabic rhetorical features into English. This study explores the treatment (or lack thereof) of different forms of repetition in Arabic religious discourse when translated into English. The prominence and resonance of recurrent forms and phraseology in Arabic literary and religious texts, especially the Quran—the Arabic language's unsurpassed masterpiece—demand that translators handle this issue with utmost delicacy. Quran translators, coming from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, vary in their approaches to repetition, ranging from literal (faithful) translation to semantically (contextually) driven or more communicative (albeit loosely equivalent) renderings. Repetition in classical Arabic takes various forms: some are conspicuous (e.g., lexical and phrase repetition), while others are less pronounced (e.g., pattern and semantic repetition). Analyzing how repetition is rendered in English reveals a discernible pattern: the more salient the repetition, the more likely translators are to retain it, whereas subtler forms are often omitted. This is due to the mismatch between Arabic and English in their treatment of repetition. While Arabic employs repetition to consolidate key concepts, enhance cohesion and coherence, and create aesthetic harmony, English generally favors conciseness. Consequently, Quranic translators sometimes struggle to replicate the Arabic style, leading to a loss of rhetorical impact. This study highlights the challenges posed by these linguistic differences and underscores the need for strategies that balance fidelity to the source text with readability in the target language.

Index Terms—Quran translation, repetition in Arabic, repetition in English, Arabic stylistics, English stylistics

I. INTRODUCTION

Of all the literary and religious texts in Arabic, the translation of the Quran, the Muslims' holy book, is considered a “major human contribution in cross-cultural interfertilization; it is a unique charity to humanity” (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p. 1). One kind of convoluted wording or phrasing that pops up on a regular basis, and the Quran mediators (including translators) try to untangle is the use of repetition. It is a tall order that translators of the Quran face as with other lexical aspects that are language-specific, time-specific, or culture-specific. Almost all translations of the Quran contain literal renderings of some lexical items that make them unintelligible to the target audience (Akbar, 1978, p. 3). It is noted that translations of the Quran are characterized by the heavy use of difficult and rare combinations of words which clearly indicates that they are source language oriented (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p. 1). This adherence to the source language style has sometimes resulted in changing the intended meaning. It is extremely important to mention here that trying to stick to the source language style and texture is difficult to maintain because there is no “perfect match between languages” (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 5).

One area which exemplifies the mismatch between Arabic and English is the translation of repetition. The two languages make a disproportionate use of repetition. A statistical inquiry into the textual features of Arabic and English reveals that Arabic exhibits more lexical and clausal repetition than English (Williams, 1989, p. ii). This disparity poses a challenge for translators in general and more conspicuously those who deal with texts of the highest caliber and endeavor to be faithful while producing the most natural form of expression in the target language. In the context of Bible translation, it is stipulated that the target text (henceforth TT) should read as naturally as possible to evoke the original's text impact on the target readers (Beekman & Callow, 1974, p. 40). This natural form should mirror the meaning of ST and not the form and hence comes the conundrum for translators working on religious or literary translation of Arabic texts (Larson, 1984, p. 10).

One feature of Quranic discourse is the repetition of lexical items which can occur intra-sententially or inter-sententially (Abdu-Raof, 2001, p. 81). Repetition in Arabic in general and in the Quran in particular has a rhetorical function and is employed to create a certain communicative effect. (cf Abdul-Raof, 2001; Dickins et al., 2002; Elewa, 2015; among others). While cohesion in Arabic is “repetition-oriented”, in English, conversely, it is “variation-oriented” (Mohamed & Omar, 2000). The English aesthetic counterbalance to repetition in Arabic is what is referred to as “elegant variation” which means the purposeful avoidance of repeating certain lexemes or phrases by means of alternative descriptive expressions (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 64).

The most conspicuous type of repetition is lexical repetition which occurs when a word is reiterated in close proximity. Consider the following example:

(هَيَّاتٌ هَيَّاتٌ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ)
[Q 23: 36]

Pickthall: **Begone, begone**, with that which ye are promised!

Yusuf Ali: "**Far, very far** is that which ye are promised!

Khan and Al-Hilali: "**Far, very far** is that which you are promised.

Khatab: **Impossible, simply impossible** is what you are promised!

The above example shows a reiteration of the same word هَيَّاتٌ (far) for the sake of emphasis. Translators differ in their treatment of such repetition. For example, Pickthall who adopts a fairly literal approach prefers to keep the ST intact by translating the repeated words verbatim. Others like Yusuf Ali, Khan and Alhilali and Khatab attempt to bring the ST closer to target reader in such a way as the target language conventions would allow. Since educated native speakers do not favor this form of repetition, these translators settle on a middle ground between an almost interlinear approach (represented here by Pickthall) and a more communicative *modus operandi* (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p. 7) where the translator attempts at producing the same response on the target language readers as the one evoked by the original text on the source language readers as the following translation by Abdel Haleem of the above verse shows:

Abdel Haleem (2004): What you are promised is **very farfetched**.

The aforementioned communicative rendition will “smooth over irregularities of style” in the target language text (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 22).

The strategy adopted by Yusuf Ali, Khan and Alhilali and Khatab is referred to as ‘semantic translation’ which gives attention to the content as well as the language of the source text (henceforth ST). This lack of agreement on the treatment of repeated words might stem from the fact that there are no perfect stylistic matches between languages and translators need to make the necessary adjustments accordingly (Larson, 1984, p. 153). Put another way, English is an economical language when it comes to repetition, and it does not employ reiteration on the same scale as other languages like Arabic (cf. Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Elewa, 2015).

The Above set of examples accentuates the importance of scrutinizing the tactics used by different translators to resolve the dichotomy that exists between repetition-oriented and change-oriented languages. The Quran has been chosen as the best site for such an inquiry as accuracy and faithfulness are of paramount gravity. We are also going to explore how translators deal with certain forms of repetition which cannot be replicated in English due to the linguistic limitations in its composition and if these were replicated literally this would lead to a “complete distortion of the meaning of the original” (Chukovsky, 1984, p. 6).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before we embark on a discussion of repetition in Arabic-to-English texts, we shall first emphasize the assertion of some researchers that this topic has not been adequately investigated. It is remarked that “repetition is essentially an aspect of comparative rhetoric, a burgeoning discipline that is still in an embryonic stage” (Abdulla, 2001, p. 290). That is true of repetition in the Quran, which is usually analyzed from a rhetorical point of view. It is possible, however, to draw on the conclusions and methodical approaches found in other genres to examine this phenomenon in the Quran.

The different forms of repetition in Arabic and their implications for translators have been analyzed (Dickins et al., 2002). The importance of their work lies in the fact that they cover the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of the translation of repetition into English. They suggest strategies for translating the different forms of repetition into English focusing on examples drawn from modern standard Arabic. They do not, however, pay particular attention to repetition in Classical Arabic. Nonetheless, their work is a significant contribution and their theoretical framework can be adopted to investigate the translation of repetition in the Quran.

In a book on Islamic translation the various forms of repetition have been investigated as one of the stylistic features of Islamic discourse (Elewa, 2015). The functions that these repetitions serve are discussed at great length and ways to translate repetition into English are proposed. What seems to be unique about this study is the reliance on data drawn from the Quran and the Prophetic Traditions.

Verb repetition, which is an important aspect of repetition in Arabic, has been discussed (Hassan, 2015). The main focus is on a classification which categorizes repetition in terms of the semantic and syntactic relationship between the reiterated items. An interesting comparison is drawn between verb repetition in Arabic and English, which can significantly affect Arabic-to-English translation. There is also a discussion of whether the cohesive function of the reiterated verb can have an impact on the strategy adopted in translation.

Literary Arabic is an area where the use of repetition is very common. The different techniques employed to translate lexical repetition in literary Arabic have been analyzed in a significant study (Jawad, 2009). In this study, the author argues that there are three main strategies for rendering recurring lexical items, citing different translations of a modern Arabic autobiography. These translation strategies are linked to the function that the different forms of repetition serve in Arabic. These strategies are literal translation, translation by synonymy, by metaphor or by an elliptical element. These strategies are examined in light of their application through various translations of Taha Hussein’s autobiography *al-Ayyām*.

Finally, the topic has been investigated thoroughly in both Arabic and English rhetorical studies. These studies focus on the function that the different forms of repetition serve. In these, numerous examples which embody the artistic achievements of various masterpieces are taken from the Holy Quran, prose fiction, poetry, as the object of study. These instances which are the cream of the crop are cited in support of the study of the relation between the linguistic form and the stylistic function and thus they facilitate the mission of any researcher who looks into repetition in Arabic-to-English translation.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study will be descriptive in nature. Descriptive translation studies give a real-life account of a translation issue or issues as they are experienced by researchers and/or translators (Holmes, 1988). In the proposed study, the notion of norms is utilized to assess the decision-making process. The decision-making process defines translation as a selection from “a number of alternatives” (Levy, 1967).

The present study will be restricted to a list of selected repeated words, phrases and patterns frequently used by Arab scholars of Islamic studies when discussing the rhetorical function of repetition in the Qur'an. Particularly, this list will be derived from a book entitled *Alltqan fi 'Uloum Al-Qur'an "The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an"* by AlSiuti. This book is commonly regarded as the primary reference in the field of Qur'anic Studies. It tackles the subtle meanings of the Qur'an and the varied interpretations in a systematic and scholarly manner. It is difficult, however, to obtain data from the aforementioned books on some forms of repetition like root repetition. Alternatively, they can be obtained through a careful reading of the Quran and manually identifying examples which involve the form of repetition under investigation. This involves random sampling, which is considered the 'gold standard' and the 'ideal scenario,' provided that due care is taken to ensure reliable and valid results while considering the probability of each population member being equally chosen (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013, p. 33). Then the translation of these repeated excerpts in the famous translations will be investigated. The famous translations are the ones that have gained recognition not only among researchers but also among different sections of readers. The first and oldest translation investigated in this paper is by Pickthall (1930); a Muslim convert and a man of letters who put his elegant English to good use by translating the Quran. Next is Yusuf Ali (1939; revised 1987), an Indian-British Quran translator whose mastery of English and Arabic enabled him to produce a free verse style Quran translation that replicates the feel of Quran style and the popularity of his translation has gained him fame around the world. Al-Hilali and Khan (1974, 1996) are an Islamic scholar from Morocco and a Pakistani-born physician, respectively, who excelled in their Islamic and Arabic knowledge. They cotranslated the Quran by solely relying on books of exegeses. The exegetical or interpretative nature of their rendition represents one of the exegetical fidelity attempts at bringing the target reader closer to the Quranic text. The last translation on our list is the collaborative effort by Dr. Mustafa Khattab (2015); an Egyptian-Canadian scholar who has written his translation with the determination to deliver the message of the Quran in a clear and accurate manner and in a smooth and eloquent English style.

Research Questions

Having explained this phenomenon in the different translations of the Holy Quran, several questions arise:

- (1) What challenges do some translators of the Quran face when rendering words or phrases involving repetition?
- (2) What kind of equivalence do translators adopt in translating Arabic repetitive patterns into English?
- (3) How do translators tackle recurrent patterns, words, or longer stretches of language in close proximity?

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Perhaps what poses a significant challenge to translators is what can be termed ‘root repetition’ which “involves repetition of the same root in two or more words in close proximity” (Dickins et al., 2017, p. 132). This form of repetition is more pervasive than the repetition of the same word discussed above. This root repetition is usually utilized as a cohesive device and has a rhetorical effect as the following example illustrates:

أَتَى لَا أَضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِنْكُمْ
[Q 3:195]

Pickthall: Lo! I suffer not the **work** of any **worker**, male or female, to be lost.

Yusuf Ali: "Never will I suffer to be lost the **work** of any of you,

Khan and Al-Hilali "Never will I allow to be lost the **work** of any of you,

Khattab: I will never deny any of you—male or female—the reward of your **deeds**.

The above example shows the use of two words which have the same root *عمل*. Translators differ in the strategies they adopt to deal with the repeated root. Pickthall adopts a literal approach despite the oddity of the structure for the target audience and the tendency of English to avoid such repetition (Dickins et al., 2017). Others such as Ali and Khan and Al-Hilali prefer to merge the two repeated forms. This semantic maneuver has the advantage of a literal translation while observing the contextual constraint of the target language. Khattab's translation does not stick to the exact wording of the

Arabic text and this culminates in a smooth English style that increases the readability of his translation since it caters to the needs of the target language audience by adhering to the target language conventions.

It seems that the widespread practice among translators of the Quran is literal translation of reiterated forms. There are, however, instances where literal translation is unlikely to be given priority. Consider the following example.

فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا
[Q 84:8]

Pickthall: He truly will **receive** an easy **reckoning**.

Yusuf Ali: Soon will his **account be taken** by an easy **reckoning**,

Khan and Al-Hilal: He surely will **receive** an easy **reckoning**,

Khatab: they will **have** an easy **reckoning**.

The above example shows a repetition of two words from the same root *حسب*. In this example, it seems that literal translation is not favored by translators. Translation by synonymy (Jawad, 2009) or what is referred to as ‘translation by variation’ (Abdulla, 2001) is used by some translators. This clearly shows the tendency of English to “vary parallels” (Dickins et al., 2002). The above renditions lend support to the assertion that in cases that involve root repetition the common practice is to “change the word class of either word” (Elewa, 2015, p. 207). So we notice in the above example that many of the translators do not prefer to keep the ST grammatical category intact by shifting to the use of the active voice in *يُحَاسَبُ* while maintaining the present participle in *حاسبًا*.

One of the manifestations of repetition in the Quran is what can be referred to as “mushakala”. In rhetorical analysis, it is defined as “referring to something using a term that is not used for it in normal speech” (Alsakaki, 1987, p. 179). The context plays a central role in elucidating the intended meaning. Consider the reiteration of the same word that involves Mushakala:

تَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيْبُهُمْ
[Q 9: 67]

Pickthall: They **forget** Allah, so He hath **forgotten** them.

Yusuf Ali: They have **forgotten** Allah; so He hath **forgotten** them.

Khan and Al-Hilali: They have **forgotten** Allah, so He has **forgotten** them.

Khatab: They **neglected** Allah, so He **neglected** them.

All the above translators with the exception of Khatab, translate the two occurrences of the word *نسى* literally ‘forget’ with the same word in both instances. The second mention of the word does not carry the same meaning as the first. God does not ‘forget’ as Muslims firmly believe and as explicitly stated in another verse. So what does the second mention of the word indicate? The different exegeses of the Quran agree that it means “leave or forsake” (c.f. Altabary, 1978; Alqurtuby, 1973). It is noted that early Arabs used to refer to the reward or punishment for an action with the same word used for the action itself (Alzarkshy, 1989). Despite this agreement, the above translators with the exception of Khatab, opt for a literal rendering of the repeated word. Khatab, contrary to his customary communicative model, resorts here to a more semantic mode of translation where contextual consistency is of paramount importance. In this way, he is aware that a given word might be translated in a variety of ways based on its respective context. Elegant variation or synonymy is also used as can be seen in the following rendering of the reiterated word (Sarwar, 2011).

Sarwar: They have **forgotten** all about God who also has **ignored** them.

The verbatim translation of repeated items which fails to adhere to the correct usage of the TT might involve ungrammatical structures. This can be seen in the translation of Arabic prepositions like *بين* which is repeated twice for no rhetorical or stylistic function while the repetition of the English equivalent gives rise to ungrammaticality. Consider the following translation (Bakhtiar, 2012):

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرَى ظَاهِرَةً
[Q 34:18]

Bakhtiar: And We made **between** them and **between** the towns which We blessed, that which are manifest towns.

Another level of repetition in the Quran is what is referred to as ‘semantic repetition’. This involves the use of “adjacent terms which share some of the semantic properties” (Elewa, 2011). This form of quasi-synonymy (Ullman, 1962, p. 193) is used more restrictively in English (Dickins et al., 2017). Consider the following:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بِنَبِيٍِّ وَعَزَيْتُمْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ
[Q 12:86]

Pickthall: He said: I expose my **distress and anguish** only unto Allah,

Yusuf Ali: He said: "I only complain of my **distraction and anguish** to Allah,

Khan and Al-Hilali: He said: "I only complain of my **grief and sorrow** to Allah,

Khatab: He replied, "I complain of my **anguish and sorrow** only to Allah.

The above translators readily embrace these semantic repetition instances since pairs of near-synonyms (also referred to as 'binomials' such as 'rules and regulation' and 'law and order') which are treated as a single unit pervade the English language. The Arabic words *بث* and *حزن* are clearly near-synonyms. We can find a few examples of conjoined near-synonyms in the Quran in a number of dedicated books (Alzarkshi, 1989). If we examine these examples in light of their translations, a tendency among Quran translators to maintain semantic repetition in many English translations is easily discernible which clearly suggests that with this kind of semantic reception in the Quran the common practice is to avoid merging the two forms which makes it at odds with the prevailing procedures among translators of general Arabic texts into English (c.f. Dickins et al., 2017). Another noteworthy tendency among a minority of Quran translators (such as Yusuf Ali above) is to render the Arabic doublet nouns using English equivalents that are clearly distinct. This has the advantage of avoiding the stylistic oddity of awkward English constructs. 'Semantic distancing' is the first port of call for dealing with the transfer of conjoined near-synonymous pairs from Arabic into English According to Dickins et al. (2017). The infrequency of this technique in Quran translation pinpoints to the zealous nature of Quran translators' endeavor to be as faithfully close to the Sacred Arabic text as possible in as much as the parameters and the poetic integrity of the English language would entertain.

Translation the recurrence of larger stretches of language in the Quran is worth investigating here. This is known as 'phrase repetition'. This form of repetition might pose problems for translators since in English the tendency is to use variation rather than reiterate a whole phrase at close intervals. Let us examine the following:

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ* ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

[Q 102:3-4]

Pickthall: **Nay, but ye will come to know! Nay, but ye will come to know!**

Yusuf Ali: But nay, **ye soon shall know** (the reality). Again, **ye soon shall know!**

Khan and Al-Hilali: Nay! **You shall come to know!** Again, no; indeed, but **soon you shall know.**

Khatab: But **no! You will soon come to know.** Again, **no! You will soon come to know.**

The above translators maintained the ST repetition. Khan and Al-Hilali, quite uncustomarily, slightly modified the reiterated phrase. This form of repetition can happen not only in very close proximity but also might involve the existence of many intervening elements. This is called "long separation" repetition which refers to the existence of many linguistic elements that separate the two occurrences of the repeated phrase (Hassan, 2015, p. 148). In English, contrastingly, repetition of long chunks of language are easily spotted in many literary works from the time of Shakespeare up to the most recent epoch in English Literature. Some excerpts from Paul Auster's (2006) novel *The Brooklyn Follies* in which repetition is used for emphasis are reproduced here:

1. If you try to drag me back there, I'm **gone from your life, gone from your life** forever...

2. **He shook his head. He shook his head,** and I started to cry again and this time it was for real...

3. I probably **would have died in that house.** It's that simple, Uncle Nat. **I would have died in that house,** and then my husband...

In this regard, the literal rendering of syntax is warned against as this might lead to incomprehensibility (Benjamin, 1992, p. 79). This runs in the face of the view that with venerable texts even small-scale interventions should not be tolerated, and the ST should shine through the translated text as if it were some form of direct quotation (House, 2015, pp. 55, 66).

Consider the following example:

لَا تَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا آتَوْا وَيُجِبُونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا فَلَا تَحْسِبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ

[Q 3:188]

Pickthall: **Think not** that those who exult in what they have given, and love to be praised for what they have not done - **Think not,** they are in safety from the doom. A painful doom is theirs.

Yusuf Ali: **Think not** that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done, - **think** escape the penalty.

Khan and Al-Hilali: **Think not** that those who rejoice in what they have done (or brought about), and love to be praised for what they have not done, - **think not** you that they are rescued from the torment, and for them is a painful torment.

Khatab: Do **not let** those who rejoice in their misdeeds and love to take credit for what they have not done **think** they will escape torment.

Despite the awkwardness of their English translations, some translators opt to repeat the two occurrences of *لا تحسبنهم* 'do not think' thus overriding the principles of correct English usage. This repetition is common among early Arabs if there is a long intervening clause between the verb and its recurrence to ensure coherence and highlight the prominence of the verb. Some translators, however, made slight changes by introducing new elements which add emphasis to the reiterated phrase. They assume that this repetition was meant to strengthen the meaning of the verse. Khatab who is

known for his smooth English style makes use of modulation in the above instance by manipulating the mental aspect from which the verse above is viewed if a strict grammatical aspect is adhered to. This has been implemented to convey the message in Arabic in the most communicatively effective way in English. In other words, the avoidance by Khattab of the superimposed syntactically inappropriate structure is one of the redeeming features of his work since it makes his translation as unforced and as clear as possible using natural combinations of English words.

Another form of repetition in the Quran is what is called ‘hyponymic repetition’ (Dickins, forthcoming) which involves the conjoining of a hyperonym and its hyponym. Another author refers to this as ‘general- specific repetition’ (Hassan, 2015, p. 149). This can be found in the following verse:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْاَوْسَطَى
[Q 2:238]

Pickthall: Be guardians of **your prayers**, and of the **midmost prayer**,

Yusuf Ali: Guard strictly your (habit of) **prayers**, especially **the Middle Prayer**;

Khan and Al-Hilali: Guard strictly (five obligatory) **As Salawat (the prayers)** especially **the middle Salat (i.e. the best prayer 'Asr)**.

Khattab: Observe the ‘**five obligatory**’ **prayers—especially the middle prayer—**

Quran exegetes have explained the significance of the singling out of the repetition of the middle prayer, which is a hyponym of (the five daily prayers). They argue that this is to indicate the profound magnitude of performing the middle prayer. In order to transfer nuances of meaning some translators have added words like ‘especially’ and ‘in particular’ to convey the function that this hyponymic repetition fulfils (Dickins, forthcoming). Having said that, the above translators are not consistent in their treatment of this kind of repetition as the following translations clearly demonstrate:

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ
[Q 2:98]

Pickthall: Who is an enemy to Allah, and **His angels** and His messengers, and **Gabriel and Michael!** Then, lo! Allah (Himself) is an enemy to the disbelievers.

Yusuf Ali: Whoever is an enemy to Allah and **His angels** and messengers, to **Gabriel and Michael**, - Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.

Khan and Al-Hilali: "Whoever is an enemy to Allah, **His Angels**, His Messengers, **Jibrael (Gabriel) and Mikael (Michael)**, then verily, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers".

Khattab: Whoever is an enemy of Allah, **His angels**, His messengers, **Gabriel, and Michael**, then ‘let them know that’ Allah is certainly the enemy of the disbelievers.

Gabriel and Michael are Archangels and, as such they are hyponyms of ‘Angels’. The underlying reiteration aims at highlighting the prominence of these high-ranking angels in the celestial hierarchy. Their glory stems from their role since they are entrusted with particularly important missions as per the Islamic and Christian creeds. In contrast to the previous set of examples, no modifier is utilized to draw the attention of readers to the subtle significance of repetition and this might be attributed to the presence of an intervening element (His messengers) and the translators’ effort to maintain the ST word order. Even the addition of a descriptor, an adjunct, or a modifier (such as ‘especially’) might disrupt the verse's flow and lead to misinterpretation. As we have already seen, Arabic can manipulate word order more easily owing to the fact that certain elements can be preposed or postposed while English does not enjoy a comparable freedom.

There are other forms of repetition that seem to be completely translation-resistant. One of these is ‘pattern repetition’ which “involves repetition of the same Arabic pattern (فاعلة، فاعل، فعيل فعل،) in two or more words in close proximity” (Dickins et al., 2017, p. 132). Here is an example:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
[Q 4:58]

Pickthall: Allah is **ever Hearer, Seer**.

Yusuf Ali: For Allah is He Who **heareth and seeth** all things.

Khan and Al-Hilali: Truly, Allah is **Ever All-Hearer, All-Seer**.

Khattab: Surely Allah is **All-Hearing, All-Seeing**

The two adjectives سميع and بصير share the same intensive pattern (فَعِيل). The above translators try to communicate the implicit quintessential nature of these divine names by using intensifiers or quantifiers. Although they reflect their templatic uniformity, they fail to lexicalize their intensive pattern. This repetition is particularly important if it involves some semantic relationship (Dickins et al., 2017, p. 139). The two adjectives above have related but distinct meanings and as such they should be translated literally and should not pose any challenge for translators (ibid).

Relating to pattern repetition is suffix repetition which is “repetition of suffixes at the end of words in close proximity (ibid). A good example of this is found in the following verse:

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكَ مَسْلُومَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَاتِنَاتٍ تَأْتِيَنَّ عِبَادَتِ سَائِحَاتٍ تَتَّبِعُونَ وَأَبْكَارًا
[Q 66:5]

Pickthall: It may happen that his Lord, if he divorces you, will give him in your stead wives better than you, submissive (to Allah), **believing, pious, penitent, devout, inclined to fasting, widows** and maids.

Yusuf Ali: It may be, if he divorced you (all), that Allah will give him in exchange consorts better than you, - **who submit (their wills), who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allah in repentance, who worship (in humility), who travel (for Faith) and fast, - previously married** or virgins.

Khan and Al-Hilali: It may be if he divorced you (all) that his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you, **Muslims (who submit to Allah), believers, obedient to Allah, turning to Allah in repentance, worshipping Allah sincerely, fasting or emigrants (for Allah's sake), previously married** and virgins.

Khatab: Perhaps, if he were to divorce you 'all', his Lord would replace you with better wives who are **submissive 'to Allah', faithful 'to Him', devout, repentant, dedicated to worship and fasting—previously married** or virgins.

This verse contains the stringing together of a number of adjectives containing the suffix (ت). It is argued that, despite the stylistic function that this form of repetition serves in Arabic, translators cannot and will not find corresponding TL forms (Dickens et al., 2017, p. 140). Alternatively, they can add words that highlight the emphatic function that this form of repetition indicates.

Similar to suffix repetition is what the famous Arabic literary scholar Arthur J. Arberry depicts in the introduction to his translation of the Quran: “for the Koran is neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both” (Arberry, 1980, p. x). The inimitable unique employment of ‘rhymed prose’ throughout the Quran cannot be emulated in Arabic let alone in English. Indubitably, taking the source pattern into the target text and fleshing it with target forms is out of the question here (Malone, 1988, p. 26). However, there have been several attempts at reproducing the Quran into cadenced, rhyming prose in some languages like German and English. One of these endeavors is by Shawkat M. Toorawa who laboriously undertook the task of translating some chapters of the Quran into rhymed prose by finding analogous endwords/rhymewords in the English translation to replicate and sustain the rhyming cluster in the Arabic text. A very quick glance at his translation reveals that many of his word choices are dictated by his zeal to evoke repeated aural patterning which are, at times, not workable (Toorawa, 2010). Notwithstanding this, he admits later that “repeated Arabic sound or pattern in the English need not always correspond to repeated sound or pattern in the Arabic: what matters is the fact of replication of an aural feature” (ibid, p. 112).

Other related yet subtle aspects of repetition in the Quran have been discussed. These include phonic phenomena such as alliteration, assonance and rhythm (Ibn Fattah, 2014). In Arabic these phonological devices make the text more memorable and quotable (Elewa, 2011). Consider the following example:

فَمَنْ زُحْرِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ
[Q 3:185]

Pickthall: Whoso is **removed** from the Fire and is made to enter paradise, he indeed is triumphant.

Yusuf Ali: Only he who is **saved** far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life)

Khan and Al-Hilali: And whoever is **removed** away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful.

Khatab: Whoever is **spared** from the Fire and is admitted into Paradise will ‘indeed’ triumph,

The verb pattern زُحْرِحَ indicates a repetitive and/or forceful removal and swift seizure. It is doubtful that translators would find an equivalent English verb with the same components that expresses these implicit aspects. Hence the above translators downplay the importance of repetition and choose not even to palliate this stylistic loss by compensatory procedures considering that these words have distinct meaning components and are bereft of one-to-one matches in English are a good site for compensation. The thrust of the repetition of the sounds in زُحْرِحَ is to fulfill what is called “sound homogeneity” (Ibn Fattah, 2014; Elewa, 2011). So, choosing forms that pattern after the Arabic construction is significant and not pedantic. But, alas, in practice it seems that translators pay no heed to such phonic aspects and they are hardly appreciable in almost all translations of the Quran.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has tackled the transfer of various forms of repetition in the Arabic Quran into English. Being two distant languages genealogically and stylistically, we have seen how Quran translators face a quandary when dealing with aesthetic uniqueness and unhackneyed eloquence such as repetition. Repetition as an expressive resource has the rhetorical functions of imparting emphasis, prominence and rhythmic flow to the text. After the examination of the different manifestations of repetition in Arabic and their equivalence or the lack thereof in their English glossing, a vivid picture emerges; the more conspicuous the form of repetition is, the more likely it is that the translator will verbalize it. Contrarily, the more subtle the repetition is, the less likely the Quran translator will be to reiterate repetitive phrasing. We can spot many translators glossing over recurrent patterns and templates which brings to mind the famous aphorism by the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev (cited in Beaugrande, 1991, p. 194) that “it is in the nature of language to be overlooked, to be a means and not an end”. To be fair to our selected translators, the challenge of smoothing over the

stylistic discrepancies between the two languages is not effortless and it requires the tenacity of translators and theorists alike to accommodate stylistic aspects in the same glaring manner employed by rhetoricians when they delve into sonorous characteristics of language.

Another interesting finding of this study is the superiority of the communicative approach in sorting out many of the contentious translation issues including repetition. It is argued that “on every level of language the essence of poetic artifice consists in recurrent returns” (Jakobson, 1966, p. 399). The adoption of the communicative strategy can fulfil the aesthetic and persuasive functions of repetition as proposed by Jakobson above. Since many of the iteration prototypes are peculiar to Arabic and since the translator who takes on the communicative mode of translation enjoys the privilege of being able to normalize inimitable rhetorical devices and figures of speech, they can resort to more direct tactics that produce more natural, smoother and conventional phrasing while conforming to the norms of English language.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will make a significant contribution to the general area of comparative linguistics particularly comparative stylistics. It is also hoped that it will be beneficial to both researchers and future translators in rendering the Holy Quran into English.

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